

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

JULY 20, 2009

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Jane Brown, Rob Caruso (Co-Chair), Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Jeff Hutter, Rosemary Larking, Heather Platt
REGRETS: Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante (Co-Chair), Jason Rosenberg
STAFF: Beverly Droz (Human & Vol. Services), Kathleen Cahill (Planning & Dev.)
GUESTS: Peter Barrer, Rosemary Korchmar, Donald Larking, J. Yannick Perrette

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The meeting was called to order at 6:40pm and chaired by Rob Caruso.

Introductions were made and guests were welcomed.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Jane and 2nd by Heather to accept the minutes from the June 15 meeting, with a note that Lucie Chansky was not present, and the correct spelling for the restaurant was Rice Valley; the motion passed unanimously.

PRESENTATION from Newton Community Farm (NCF)

We welcomed Peter Barrer, Board President for NCF, and J. Yannick Perrette, a classroom teacher at NCF. Peter had presented an overview of the Farm at the MCPD May meeting.

Tonight they are reporting on the specific application for CDBG Access Funding for raised garden beds and adaptive tools to facilitate handicap access at their Learning Garden (LG) which is located at the corner of the field. The Farm is at Winchester and Nahanton Streets.

They brought a map and described locations including stone dust path from handicap parking to the LG, approximately 50 feet from the parking lot to the garden. All garden beds will be accessible for chairs. Cahill noted that the gravel area at the handicap spaces needs to be paved. Photos were shown. Yannick Perrette described the blueprint and tactile map. Peter noted they give guided tours but they don't let people roam around due to legal issues.

Jini suggested at some point having an audio display describing where things are and gave examples of such displays at other non-profits. There was discussion of being sure things are described appropriately such as having introductions at beginning of a class, having accessible names of the plants at the plants so visually impaired people are able to touch or smell them.

The project they are presenting is the first step. They expect to have it finished by the Farm's 10/18/09 Harvest Festival. The second step is renovation of the barn so classes can be held in there. Total cost for this step is \$2,826.42.

K. Cahill reminded the members that we have an increase in curb cut funding for FY2010 from \$75K to \$80K so this \$2,826 would come from there.

Lucie motioned to approve funding of the \$2,826 for this project, Jini seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The Committee thanked Peter and Yannick for their presentation.

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Kathleen Cahill presented the report. Comments are noted after a project.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$7,818; Budget balance: \$11,995; CD10-03D, Budget balance: \$6,000). Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a priority intersection; however that is on-hold pending a final decision by the Newton Corner Advisory Committee on VHB conceptual plans. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is another priority intersection. The scope of changes at Washington & Commonwealth includes an upgrade to the existing traffic signal equipment; there is approximately \$65,000 in funds available for this work. If leftover funds are available after the above equipment is installed accessible pedestrian signals will be considered and the Mayor's Committee will be able to weigh in on options. Other priority locations submitted to traffic engineering include: Washington and Beacon as well as Washington Street by Newton-Wellesley Hospital. The City's contract with Republic ITS is currently expired and awaiting renewal. The new contract is expected to be executed this month. *--There was discussion about the Washington and Comm. Ave intersection. Cahill noted that the wording is directly from an email she received from Clint, who is waiting for approval of funding. Members were upset about the lack of progress and lack of communication with the MCPD. We discussed that accessibility should be built into the plan to be sure that access issues, particularly APS and curb cuts, are adequately addressed. It should be required that the intersection becomes accessible. Rob said the Committee will write a letter to Clint.*

Charlesbank Playground (Project CD0903C. Budget balance, \$30,000). Project includes the installation of a ramped concrete walkway with metal handrails, designed to complement new play equipment, benches, and picnic tables and allow access through the park.

Curb Cuts (Project CD0903G, Expended \$48,879 Budget balance, \$42,255; CD10-03C, Budget balance: \$80,000). Funds were used to complete the following curb cuts: Auburn and Washington (4/widening of island) Mason-Rice (6), Temple and Myrtle (2), JFK Circle (2). Committee earmarked remaining funds for curb cuts on Everett and Gibbs and Sumner and Gibbs in Newton Centre. Construction on these curb cuts will hopefully begin by early August. *-- Cahill reported that neighbors got very involved with Everett/Gibbs and Sumner/Gibbs and it held things up more than 6 weeks. There was a search to find perfect truncated dome. She said the decision was to go with stamped domes (paint on concrete) but there is the concern that the domes get uneven with wear. Fiberglass domes aren't used because they break. Cahill has been looking at new products. One comes in blocks, so if a curb cut has some area damage, you only have to replace that block part of it.*

Jeff noted that at Commonwealth Avenue at Boston University east, the size of the domes are larger and it helps the visually impaired, and it also causes the wheelchairs to be slowed before rolling down into the street. Cahill pointed out that a study said red is better than yellow but the city engineer said they are going with federal yellow. Jini stated that white is better than yellow.

Retrofitting Curb Cuts (Project CD0903E, Budget balance, \$6,000). A list of 7 locations (Homer Street, Beacon St. @ Dalton, Centre Green @ Langley, 1188 Centre Green, 82 Lincoln Street, 100 Walnut Street, 28 Commonwealth St) (19 curb cuts) have been identified by committee members and staff. Project 100% complete; awaiting final labor and material bills.

Cold Spring Accessible Route (CD10-03A, Budget balance: \$36,000) Project includes accessible “L shaped” pathway from parking area to circle where the farmer’s market is held. Project will be bid with other CDBG-R (stimulus) projects this fall and begun spring 2010.
-- Cahill noted this is waiting for stimulus funds.

Crystal Lake Accessible Pathway (CD10-03B, Budget balance: \$9,000) Project includes funds for material costs associated with the construction of an accessible pathway along City’s property easement on 230 Lake Avenue. Pre-construction work is being completed throughout July and August; construction begins late August (after swim session approximately August 23) and must be complete by mid-October.

Nahanton Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Space (CDR09-03, Budget balance: \$30,000) Project includes retrofitting park for handicap accessibility through the construction of an accessible pathway and the addition of a van accessible parking space. Project will likely go out to bid fall 2009.

Newton Centre Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Spaces (CDR09-04, Budget balance: \$23,500) Project includes construction of an accessible pathway and the addition of two handicap accessible parking spaces. Project will likely go out to bid fall 2009.

CONSOLIDATION PLAN – Kathleen Cahill

K. Cahill suggested that the next steps in consolidated plan process be continued at the next meeting. The Crystal Lake Task Force met last week but they did not make final decisions so they will meet again in mid-August. Therefore, Amy Yuhasz will not present tonight, and Kathleen suggested we may consider meeting later in August so we could hear the update from this group.

OTHER ISSUES

Golden Living Center (25 Amory Street)

Rosemary reported that while she visited there, she found no wheelchair accessible bathrooms, even the public ones. The resident rooms she visited did not have access bathrooms and the space between beds was small. The committee discussed this as a public health issue and also in non compliance with AAB regulations. Bev will email Dave Norton in ISD about this location.

Johnny’s Luncheonette, Newton Centre

K. Cahill reported that Dave Norton visited this location and said the door opener switch is working. Norton told them to either leave it on or leave the door open.

Warren House

Rob visited Rosemary’s apartment and described the situation. A nice job was done replacing the ramp that had been falling apart. But they have not made the ramp go into the patio. He thought they could use pavers and not have to build anything. The back door threshold had also been fixed.

Snow Committee/Snow Removal

Rob suggested we could arrange to have Alderman Scott Lennon attend one of our meetings. He has a sub-committee of Aldermen and they have been working on the draft of a plan. The goal is “what can we do together?” Rob used to send out the printed regulations of what businesses have to do about snow removal. But it should be up to the City to inform businesses about this issue as well as to fine non-compliant businesses.

Bev mentioned that she gave her contact info to a combined small group of League of Women Voters and Parent Teacher Organizations representatives who are also looking at snow removal issues. She expects they will be more active in the fall and said perhaps we’ll be able to bring everyone to the table in order to make some real progress.

Announcements

Bev reported briefly on three miscellaneous items:

A resident, Mr. Triplett contact Bev regarding serious sidewalk disrepair in front of Citizen’s Bank on Walnut Street, Newtonville as well as both curb cut ramps on the south side of the Lowell Ave and Washington Street intersection. He uses a wheelchair and said he fell there. It was determined that Bev will send this information to Dept. of Public Works.

The Newton Free Library contacted Bev to request assistance for a deaf patron who would like to have someone type into a laptop verbatim as people are speaking at a meeting. Bev told the library staff she would contact the MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Jini said to request a “CART” interpreter.

A resident, Mr. Amitai Lipton wrote a letter to Police Captain Howard Mintz detailing the vehicles parked dangerously and illegally along High Street and Winter Street in Newton Upper Falls every weekday morning. Mr. Lipton is a traffic engineer with the Mass. Highway Dept. He is frustrated that his many phone calls to the Police during the past several months about this situation have been to no avail. Bev noted that she sent an acknowledgement letter to him.

Meeting for August:

Members discussed a possible meeting for our scheduled date of Aug. 10. Bev will check with Rob and Girard, and Kathleen to see if we have enough business items, and will email committee members to inform everyone of the final decision.

A motion passed to adjourn at 8:20 pm.

Note the change: the next meeting will be on Monday, August 17 at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Bev Droz